

# CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS & WORKPLACE STEREOTYPES

## PRACTICAL ACTIVITY



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## THEMATIC AREA

Challenging Gender Norms & Workplace Stereotypes

## ACTIVITY TITLE AND INTRODUCTION

### Spot the Stereotype: A Team Exercise on Workplace Bias

This practical activity enables small teams to collaboratively identify subtle gender stereotypes that appear in daily workplace interactions.

Using short, realistic micro-scenarios, participants analyse bias patterns, discuss their impact on employees, and redesign alternative responses that promote inclusion. The exercise strengthens awareness, teamwork, and practical problem-solving aligned with the module's aim of challenging gendered assumptions in SMEs.

### Background

Gender norms influence decisions around flexibility, parental leave, caregiving responsibilities, and leadership potential. While some stereotypes are explicit, most operate subtly through everyday comments or expectations. These “low-intensity” behaviours are often normalised and therefore remain unchallenged.

This activity helps teams surface these hidden messages and reflect collectively on how to replace them with equitable and supportive workplace practices.

### Description

Teams work with four micro-scenarios, each presenting an example of subtle gender stereotyping connected to caregiving, flexibility, or role expectations. In two rounds, participants identify the stereotype present, discuss its potential impact, and redesign a more inclusive response.

At the end of the activity, the team produces a short “Stereotype-Free Practice List” that summarises concrete actions they commit to implementing in their workplace.

### Micro-Scenarios (printed cards):

- **Scenario 1 – The “Helper” Assumption**

Anna is asked to “take notes since she is more organised,” even though the task is not part of her role.

- **Scenario 2 – The Father Surprise**

A manager reacts with “That’s unexpected” when Kostas asks for carer’s leave to support his sick child.

- **Scenario 3 – Flexibility with Conditions**

A woman requesting flexible hours is told: “Okay, but don’t let it become a habit.”

- **Scenario 4 – The Fast-Track Male**

A male colleague who recently became a father is praised for “balancing everything well,” while a new mother working the same hours is described as “struggling.”

## PHOTO



Free pic downloaded from here: <https://pixabay.com/photos/startup-meeting-brainstorming-594090/>

## DURATION OF ACTIVITY (IN MINUTES)

60–75 minutes

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completing this activity, participants will be able to:

- Identify subtle forms of gender stereotyping in everyday interactions.
- Analyse how these stereotypes influence professional opportunities and shared caregiving roles.
- Collaborate in teams to generate inclusive responses.
- Develop actionable recommendations for more gender-equal workplace practices.

## AIM OF THE ACTIVITY

To support small teams in recognising and addressing hidden workplace stereotypes and to encourage the adoption of inclusive behaviours and responses that reduce gender bias in SME environments.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR ACTIVITY

- Printed micro-scenario cards
- Paper, pens, markers
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Post-it notes
- Timer
- “Stereotype-Free Practice List” template (provided as a 1-page sheet)

## STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

### Task A – Identify the Stereotype (30 minutes)

1. Divide the group into 2–3 small teams.
2. Distribute two micro-scenarios to each team.
3. Teams discuss and answer the following:
  - What stereotype is present?
  - How might this influence male and female employees differently?
  - What organisational messages does this behaviour reinforce?
  - What are the short- and long-term consequences for equity?
4. Teams summarise findings on flipchart paper under:  
**| Bias | Impact | Consequences |**

### Task B – Redesign the Situation (25 minutes)

1. Teams rewrite each scenario using more inclusive behaviour or response.
2. They propose:
  - An immediate inclusive reaction
  - A fair managerial response
  - A micro-action the team can implement immediately
  - A longer-term action (culture or policy)
3. Outputs are shared in a “Gallery Walk,” where participants highlight the most practical ideas.

## Wrap-Up

The facilitator or group compiles the best ideas into a Stereotype-Free Practice List (5–7 commitments). These practices can then be integrated into team meetings, HR processes, or internal guidelines to support consistent efforts in challenging gender stereotypes.

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